

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4-38, 40, 41, 43-47, and 49-55 are currently pending. The present Amendment amends Claims 1, 14, 37, and 44; cancels Claims 3, 39, 42, and 48; and adds Claims 50-55. The changes and additions to the claims are supported by the originally filed application. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings were objected because of a missing reference. The disclosure was objected to because of an informality. Claims 1, 2, 14, 17, 37-40, 44, and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Domoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,689,767, herein "Domoto"). Claims 1, 14-16, 37, 44, 45, and 47 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Oda et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,266,498, herein "Oda"). Claims 41 and 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Domoto. Claims 3-13, 42, 48, and 49 were objected to but allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 18-36 were allowed.

In response to the objection to the drawings, Applicant amended the specification to remove the referenced description 32 cited in the Office Action. Accordingly, the objection is believed to have been overcome. The drawings are now believed to be compliant and no further objection on this basis is anticipated.

In response to the objection to the disclosure, Applicant amended the specification to correct the cited typographical error. Accordingly, the objection to the disclosure is believed to have been overcome.

Applicant appreciatively acknowledges the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 3-13, 18-36, 42, 48, and 49.

In response to the objection to Claim 3, Applicant amended Claim 1 to incorporate allowable Claim 3. Accordingly, Claim 3 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 1 and dependent Claims 3-13 are now allowable.

Similarly, Applicant amended Claim 14 to incorporate allowable Claim 3. Amended Claim 14 recites the same limitations with respect to the belt device as allowable amended Claim 1. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 14 and dependent Claims 15-17 are allowable.

In response to the rejections of Claim 37, Applicant amended Claim 37 to incorporate Claim 39 and allowable Claim 42. Accordingly, Claims 39 and 42 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 37 and dependent Claims 38, 40, 41, and 43 are allowable.

In response to the rejections of Claim 44, Applicant amended Claim 44 to incorporate Claim 48. Accordingly, Claim 48 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 44 and dependent Claims 45-47 and 49 are allowable.

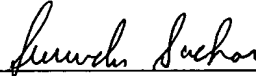
Furthermore, in response to the objection to Claim 49, Applicant added new Claims 50-55. New Claims 50-54 are combinations of original claims and thus do not introduce new matter. Specifically, Claim 50 is allowable Claim 49 rewritten in independent form and Claims 51-54 recite the features of Claims 45-48. Claim 55 recites features similar to the features of Claim 47. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 50 and dependent Claims 51-55 are allowable.

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Consequently, it is believed that the application is in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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